

Pam  
Misc  
C-Me  
1678

# ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE BIBLE FROM PERSIAN LIFE

*Annie Rhea Wilson*







*Ephraim*

# ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE BIBLE FROM PERSIAN LIFE

*Annie Rhea Wilson*



## Foreword

Persia has been my home half my life. My father and mother were missionaries in Urumia where I was born. After my father's death my mother brought us three little children to America. As we entered the harbor of New York "Aunt Susan" who was traveling with us, called me from my berth: "Come and see your birthday present." Taking me on deck she pointed to the land. "There's America, your birthday present, on your eighth birthday." So Persia is my birthplace and America my fatherland.

Returning to Persia as a bride the happiest years of my life were passed there in the Memorial School for Boys till the death of my husband ended my connection with the mission. mission.

We went to Persia expecting to teach the Bible but found the people by their language and customs interpreted it to us, and, in sharing it with them, we gained a new understanding and saw how it met our need and theirs in the experiences of life. Changes are coming so rapidly in the East that I feel we must catch the picture before it fades, to preserve the real Oriental significance of the Bible.

—ANNIE RHEA WILSON.



## Costumes and Customs



WHEN the first minister was sent from Persia to the United States, I met his sister and asked how he liked America. She said he wrote there was one thing that greatly embarrassed him. Whenever he appeared on the street boys would call after him, "Baa, Baa," on account of his lamb's wool cap. There is nothing so distinctive as a national head-dress. It is the last thing to be changed, so it was not a trivial matter, when Mustapha Kemal Pasha of Turkey ordered all his subjects to discard the fez over night and appear the next day in European hats. He wanted in this striking way to express the break with the past and the new attitude of Turkey toward western civilization. Costume then is not a matter of indifference, though we deprecate the adoption of western dress, for Oriental garments are simpler, more artistic, graceful and becoming. But costume in the East is changing; the Persians, as well as the Turks, have adopted European hats.

To begin at birth, swaddling clothes are used, as they were when the baby Jesus was wrapped in them, looking just like one of Andrea della Robbia's *bambinos*. Squares of cloth are folded around the baby and up over his feet, then a broad band is passed around and around making him as stiff as a little mummy. On the eighth day a boy is circumcised, if a Moslem, as was the Jewish custom. Often a child is under a vow just as Hannah, when she prayed for a son, vowed that "no razor shall come upon his head." A little boy in our school had long hair braided down his back and an earring in one ear. I was told his mother had lost several children so vowed this child to God till he was eight years old. Then his hair was cut and burned as an offering and a lamb was sacrificed.

There is no distinctive costume of childhood. Children are dressed like little old men and women. So the child Samuel wore a priest's ephod. I have seen a boy of four in a general's uniform with epaulets and even a toy sword. A little girl on the street wears a veil like her mother.

The costume of women indicates their seclusion. They are called "purdah nishin"—sitters behind a curtain, and they wear outside a curtain or veil enveloping them. In Ruth (3:15) this veil is spoken of, large enough to carry six measures of barley. Paul urges Christian women (1 Cor. 11:6) to keep the etiquette of modesty and be "covered." But the East is changing and in Turkey the veil is officially discarded; in Persia, too, the city women are dropping it. An old Persian said, "First change men's hearts, then leave off the veil."

The chief business of rich women is beautifying themselves. Their ornaments, rings, necklaces and bracelets, the elaborate plaiting of the hair in tiny braids, thirty or more, the pride in beautiful apparel and the time and money spent for beauty are the same today, as when Peter advised Christian women to "adorn themselves in modest apparel, not with braided hair, gold or pearls or costly array." The elaborate ceremony of the bath is peculiar to the East. The women go in groups to the public bath on "Women's Day" making it a social occasion. There they use one great tank, soaking themselves in almost boiling water. Then a great deal of time is spent on their hair and make-up, painting eyebrows, cheeks, fingernails and even toe-nails.

To the woman in Christ's parable, her necklace of gold coins was her most precious possession, as it is today, the coins being her dowry, so when she lost one it was a great concern and a great joy when she found it.

Rings are worn by men, as well as women, especially the signet ring used to seal documents. Such a ring Ahasuerus gave first to Haman, then to Mordecai, thus conferring his own authority. The Prodigal Son is reinstated by a ring on his finger. When Christ promised "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name" (John 15:16), it is as if he gave his signet ring to sign our petitions. My father, as treasurer of the mission, had a signet ring to sign all legal documents.



Men wear an inner and outer long garment translated in Matt. 5:40 as coat and cloak. There is a special coat of Persian shawl edged with fur called a "khalat" or robe of honor bestowed by the king as a mark of favor. A station some miles out of Tabriz is called "Khalat Pushan"—putting on the robe of honor. The recipient comes here to receive and don the robe. Often it is one the King himself has worn, and considered all the more an honor. This custom of robing is frequently referred to in the Bible. "He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isa. 61:10). In the vision of Zechariah, "Now Joshua, the high priest, was clothed with filthy garments and stood before the Angel and unto him he said, 'Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.'" In Revelation, "White robes were given unto every one of them." A little incident in our own life I often told to the Persian women to illustrate this verse. When we came home to the United States, travel-worn, grimy and dusty from our long journey, we found a white suit for each one of us, prepared by my mother.

The girdle is an essential part of a man's costume, used as a pocket and also as a belt to tuck up the long robes. So Jesus "girded himself" to wash his disciples' feet. Agabus bound Paul's girdle on his own hands and feet prophesying, "Thus shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle."

Shoes of the East are sandals which they leave at the door. One can count guests by the pairs of shoes, which I often did to see how many cups of coffee to send in, for as a woman I couldn't go in. An amusing incident is connected with this—the Governor with great dignity and many attendants was calling at our home. When he came out, his shoes were nowhere to be seen. There was consternation till a servant came running to say, "The baby has them on," and there was two-year-old Bobby on the garden walk shuffling along in the great man's shoes. The call ended in laughter, formality was forgotten and the ice was broken.

Now let us look at the Oriental house. It is secluded from the street by a high wall, in which a heavy, double door is set. A door-keeper sits within, who opens the door in answer to the thud of the

ponderous iron knocker. Our door-keeper was formerly a bandit, is now a Christian and has adopted as his own the verse: "I would rather be a door-keeper in the house of the Lord than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." Rhoda, the little maid in Acts 12:13, heard Peter's knock at the gate when he came at night, released from prison, but she "opened not the gate for gladness." The others within could not believe it was he, thinking it was his ghost, but she had recognized his voice. Christ says, "Behold I stand at the door and knock." He forces no entrance. "If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in." These words have inspired some beautiful hymns and Hoffman's tender picture.

Within walls and gate are the courts, one behind another, the men's and women's quarters separate, the latter called Harem—forbidden. This custom is repeated in the Temple, where there was a "court for women." Even in Armenian churches the gallery was reserved for women and such a babble came from it that one understands Paul's words, "Let your women keep silence in the churches." Of course, now they are not separated in Christian churches, but Moslem women cannot enter a mosque. During the month of fasting, when services are held at night, I have passed a lighted mosque, where men were sitting on rugs within drinking tea and listening to the Mollah preaching, while outside on the cobblestones of the street were huddled veiled women trying to catch what they could. The apostles "marveled that Jesus talked with the woman at the well," but "in Christ there is neither male nor female," a doctrine that will revolutionize the very architecture of a Persian home. The contrast is seen in Armenian homes where men and women are not separate.

Furniture is of the simplest kind. The bed is a pallet spread on the floor at night, folded in a niche under a curtain by day, so Jesus could say to the paralytic, "Take up thy bed and walk."

Light is furnished by candle or lamp. The latter is a bowl of clay, filled with oil made from the castor oil bean, in which is the wick made of flax. The verse, "The smoking flax he will not quench" Matt. 12:20, should be translated, the smoking wick. A village woman holds hand or veil to shield the tiny spark of light, as she crosses



a windy courtyard, so precious is it, thus God cherishes a tiny spark of faith.

There are great porous water-jars set in a rack in the hall, such as Jesus commanded to be filled with water at the marriage feast in Cana. This incident is often discussed, as Mohammed prohibited wine. A Mollah asked my husband, "What kind of wine was it?" He answered, "I suppose the same as the wine Mohammed says flows like a river through the streets of Paradise." No objection could be raised. These water jars women fill at the spring at evening, carrying them gracefully on head or shoulder. It is a sign that the Samaritan woman felt her social ostracism that she came to the well alone at noon. (John 4:7.) Wine and water are also carried in skins, so Luke 5:37 should be translated, "No man putteth wine into old skins" (not bottles).

Cooking is done in iron or brass pots over an open fire, which makes them black with soot. This explains the verse, "Though ye have lain among the pots, yet ye shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver" (Ps. 68:13). Zechariah says, "Every pot shall be holiness unto the Lord." No more vivid words could be used for the sanctification of common things.

A distinctive feature of the Oriental home is the flat roof or house-top, reached by steps outside. Deuteronomy 22:8 orders a battlement or parapet to be built "for thy roof that thou bring not blood upon thy house, if any man fall from thence." There are cases of such accidents today. Fleeting over the house-tops, (Matt 24:17) can be done by jumping from roof to roof, as we saw a man do, when a mob was in pursuit of him. The house-top is a place of seclusion and quiet. No doubt Jesus and Nicodemus sat there as Dr. Dodd has described in this poem;

"This is our roof, as you no doubt can see,  
In any inland city of the East,  
A sort of upper world, a step withdrawn  
Above the daytime level of the street . . .  
One night he sat upon a roof like this  
And with him was a thoughtful man perplexed,  
Who sought him in the shadow of the night.

It is a fantasy of course to frame that night  
With these familiar sights and sounds,  
And yet the changeless East repeats the Past  
Age after age. Why should it not be so?  
And so they talked in that unconscious place  
And all the quiet splendor of the night  
Made silent music for those words, those words.  
You feel that little sighing breeze? It stirs  
The poplars in the market-place below.  
'The wind blows, where it listeth and thou hearest  
The sound thereof.' How strange it seems and yet  
How near and real."

Another house-top scene changed the history of the world, when Peter saw a vision and heard the words, "What God hath cleansed, that call not thou uncommon," which opened the Church to the Gentiles. Few houses are built with even a second story called bala khana from which we get our word, balcony. And here is the "guest room" furnished for a banquet. In such a room the Last Supper took place.

Family life within these homes was patriarchal, sons bringing home their "brides" (the word used also for daughter-in-law), and all living in one big family. In our neighbor's house there were the old father and mother, three sons, their wives and children. In one night two pair of twins were born, increasing the already large family. It is customary to use the term "brother" among all the sons of the house. I was calling at a house and my host introduced his brother, adding, "You would not call him my brother, but we had the same grandfather and grew up together." Perhaps after this fashion Jesus had brothers and sisters. His "brethren" (John 7:2-5) seem to be older and to claim authority over him, like older kinsmen. On the cross, Jesus committed his mother to John, which does not seem credible if she had other children of her own. John had a nearer relationship than ties of blood. "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother," (Mark 3:55).

There is this great difference between Armenian and Mohammedan homes, that in an Armenian home there is but one wife, in the



Mohammedan the law allows four. It is unnecessary to say that jealousy, distrust and suspicion are the result. Children grow up in this atmosphere, and this is the reason there is lack of coöperation in after life, distrust of one another is inbred. Divorce is the man's prerogative and he need only say three times to his wife, "You are not necessary," and she is dismissed. Women, who have no sense of security or loyalty, line their pockets against the evil day. A Persian woman said to me, "Your prophet was good to you women." However, I have known cases of happy marriages when there has been but one wife. The following story shows the woman's point of view. In our school was a brilliant pupil who edited a paper called "Shafak"—light, and he was called by that name. When the Russians took the city, he headed a procession of students who went to all the consulates to protest against the invasion. His name was put on the blacklist, condemned to die. He was in hiding for months, till a princess sent him word that she had a disguise and passport ready for him to escape with her caravan. He went to thank her and asked why she had done this. She replied, "Some years ago my husband wished to take another wife as I had borne him no children. You met him and persuaded him not to do so, showing the evils of polygamy. I owe you my life and cannot do too much for you."

Hospitality is an Oriental virtue and the expressions to "break bread and eat salt" are a token of friendship. The Old Testament abounds in instances, e. g., Abraham hastening to order food for stranger guests (Gen. 18:1-8). The "staff of life" is bread, as it is the principal article of food, with little else often but cheese and herbs. A workman stops at noon to "eat bread." A little refugee child begged for a crust to put under his pillow at night just to assure himself that he would not starve. The neighbor in Christ's parable asks for "three loaves of bread" when unexpected guests arrive. The etiquette of hospitality is prescribed. A last-minute message is expected, "Come, for all things are ready." At my first dinner party I failed to send this message and waited in vain for my guests. The next day they met my cook in the bazaar and asked, "Why didn't your lady send word?" The host in receiving an honored guest says, like the centurion, "I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my

roof." The kiss of welcome is given in greeting on both cheeks. Jesus reproached his Pharisee host, "Thou gavest me no kiss," and also, "my head with oil thou didst not anoint." I have often had my hostess pour into my hand a few drops of the costly "attar of roses" to rub on my hair. Precedence is strictly observed in the seating of guests, the "chief seat" being at the head of the room. Jesus gave a rule of etiquette (Luke 14:10), "When thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest place, that, when he that bade thee come, he may say to thee, 'Friend, go up higher.'"

There are special social occasions and weddings are the most joyful, with the greatest profusion and extravagance of feasting, with music and dancing and lavish gifts. So Jesus uses a Wedding Feast (Matt. 22:2-14), to portray the highest enjoyment and social pleasure of Heaven. The custom of going out "to meet the bridegroom" is the same today and it is always "at midnight."

Mourning is also an occasion when crowds gather, and, as at Jairus' house, there is heard afar the sound of many weeping and wailing greatly. Women give way to frantic, hysterical frenzy, beating the breast, tearing the hair, throwing ashes on the head. When my first baby died, many came to mourn with me, even some I didn't know, and I read to them Jesus' word, "Suffer little children to come unto me." One woman soon after lost her own little boy and her friends were amazed at her self-control. She said, "I have heard that Jesus takes little children in his arms and that comforts me."

Moslem religious customs are so vividly described in the gospel of Matthew that it seems written for them today. (Matt. 6.) Almsgiving, prayer and fasting Moslems call "pillars of Islam." A lady receiving guests will go to her prayer rug and perform her devotions, though it is a matter of rote and the words are in the Arabic language which she doesn't know and has learned by heart. Thus she prays at five stated seasons during the day; at dawn, when the muezzin calls—"Prayer is better than sleep," at noon, mid-afternoon, at sunset, and after nightfall. Certainly it impresses one with their sincerity. Fasting during one month from dawn till dark is a test of endurance, but is followed by a night of feasting. It is easy on the rich, hard on the poor working man. Beggars on the street hold out their hands cry-



ing, "Sawab! Sawab!" (merit) The motive appealed to is not love of God or man, but your own advantage to make merit. So also in fasting and prayer the purpose is frankly to make merit, in anxiety to have good deeds counterbalance the bad. Religion is part of the daily life. The name "Allah" is continually on their lips, or in such phrases as "Mashallah" (May God protect), "Inshallah!" (if God wills). The name Moslem means "resigned." The will of God is supreme and Fatalism is the natural result. I asked a villager, who brought me eggs, "Are they fresh?" He lifted his eyes to Heaven, "God knows." He took no responsibility. This attitude brings certain virtues. Reverence and devotion are expressed in the posture of prayer, "Forehead in the dust." Patience is a marked trait—the acceptance of the inevitable. There is neither unseemly haste nor any effort to remedy evils. One realizes the contrast with Jesus' attitude, "It is my meat to do the will of my Father in Heaven"—a glad coöperation to fulfill God's will, not a blind resignation to inscrutable "Kismet." In an epidemic of diphtheria our doctor told the father of five children about anti-toxin, but he refused to have his children inoculated, saying, "If they live, they live, if they die, they die." Within a week his five children were dead.

In two niches on either side of the pulpit in our church in Tabriz are written the Ten Commandments in the beautiful Arabic letters, gold on a blue background. At the end is written, "I have given you a new Commandment that ye love one another as I have loved you." Mosques are always adorned with verses from the Koran like the Taj Mahal in India, so this inscription is in accordance with their custom. I have seen men reading it over and over—a new way of fulfilling the Law.

The custom of thinking of and speaking of "the Evil Eye" is universal. It is a mysterious, malign power always ready to bring disaster, where there has been joy. I have heard a mother at the clinic, when asked, "What is the matter with your baby?" reply, "He is so beautiful people exclaimed over him so that the Evil Eye fell upon him." If a child is admired, the mother exclaims "Mashallah!" To those living in constant dread it is indeed "good news" to

hear that "God is Love" and "All things work together for good to those that love God."

"In Heavenly Love abiding,

No change my heart shall fear."

"Perfect love casteth out fear."

Travel is still largely on foot even as Paul tramped the Roman roads. "How beautiful are the feet of them that bring glad tidings." Horses, mules, camels and donkeys are used also and there is a special breed of ass, large, white and gentle, which religious leaders ride, and, as I have seen one so riding with his followers running beside him, I could imagine the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. When Jesus gave instructions, "Salute no man by the way," the suggestion is the urgency of the message, for Oriental greetings are long drawn-out with many questions, "Whence do you come?" "Whither do you go?" (Quo vadis?) An American traveler once asked a missionary accompanying him, "Why do you say Yankee doodle dandy to everyone we meet?" Strange to say his answer sounded like that, "yengee dunya dandee" but means, "He is from the new world." "Salaam Aleikum," (Peace to you), is the greeting between Moslems, but to a Christian they say, "May God keep you." So Jesus said, "If ye salute (say Salaam) your brethren only what do ye more than others?" Inns or caravanserais are the same as in Bible times—a court with high walls, stables built around below and rooms above. If the latter are full, then the former must be accepted as Joseph had to do at Bethlehem.

Occupations are varied in village or city. Agriculture uses the same primitive implements by hand, as in the verse, "Whose fan is in his hand" to winnow wheat. Irrigation is the only means of watering fields, so water is an indispensable boon. On a certain day it was our turn for the water that ran through the street and our old gatekeeper came for a bundle of rags to stuff in the water-course so it would flow into our yard. All night long his lantern could be seen as he went about with his spade opening now one ditch, now another. This explains the verse, "The King's heart is in the Lord's hand, as the rivers of water he turneth it whithersoever he will." The word Paradise is a Persian word meaning a watered garden, enclosed.



In the house women are busy at their own tasks. "Two women grinding at the mill" sit one on either side of two great stones, with a hole in the center through which is a wooden handle which they grasp and turn, thus intimately working together, but "one shall be taken, the other left." Jesus refers to the daily bread making, hiding leaven in meal, to sweeping the house, to patching (not new cloth on old), to the pain and joy of child-bearing, to women serving at meals and cumbered with many cares, to children playing in the streets mimicking now a wedding with piping and dancing, now the lamenting of mourners. Every one of the persons in Christ's parables lives and acts before our eyes, the sower going forth to sow, the shepherd leading his flock, the gardener pruning his vines or cutting down a barren tree, the landlord demanding his rent in kind, the steward of an absentee master tinkering with his accounts, the unjust judge open to bribery but worn out by a widow's importunity, the officer dragging a debtor to prison, the master expecting his slave to work all day and to come home at night to wait on him.

Christ's miracles, too, show the need and suffering found today in the East. The blind beggars sit at the street corners, paralytics are carried to waters reputed to be healing, the insane are regarded as demon-possessed and are chained and beaten, lepers cry "unclean, unclean." There is a leper village two hours from Tabriz, where we used to go to give food, clothing and medicine and to tell of Jesus who healed lepers. A woman leper said to me, "We loved him from the very first time we heard of him." The word they use of themselves, "unclean," means contaminating and a mother will show her baby with pride saying, "See! he is clean." When I first saw them with scarred faces, mutilated hands, some crawling on their knees, I burst into tears. A woman asked, "Sister, what is your great sorrow?" "Oh! I weep for you. I did not know before how sad your lot is." She called to the others, "Come, here is one who is sorry for us." They would say, "You are the only ones who care for us." Now I am glad to say the new king of Persia has built a leprosarium. Many suffer from cataract and think they are incurably blind. A woman on the border of Afghanistan heard of the wonderful cures at our hospital in Meshed. She made the journey of three hundred

miles on a donkey with her nephew and after a successful operation returned saying, "Whereas I was blind, now I see."

As to government, twenty-five years ago it was exactly the same as in the Book of Esther, a supreme autocracy. I have seen five kings on the throne of Persia and the struggle for a representative government. Going from a Republic we were all the more impressed with the absolute power of the king. His word was law. He could set up and put down as he willed. A nobleman living near us was guilty of embezzlement. The king's officers entered his house, seized him, and carried him in chains to Teheran. Before he reached the city a messenger from the king brought him three choices, the rope, the sword, the cup of poison. He chose the last. There was no trial and no appeal. There are instances of a sudden rise to power like Haman's and as sudden a downfall, just according to the king's whim. The royal harem described in the Book of Esther is true to life. The king can take whom he will. One favorite wife was a miller's daughter, whom the king happened to see and admire when riding through her village on a hunting expedition. Yet royalty itself had a downfall when Reza Khan, a soldier of fortune, seized the throne from the dissolute young king and crowned himself. Just such a story as one can read in the Book of Kings.



## Names and Titles



Persian lady, calling on me, kept fingering her rosary and mumbling to herself till I, finding it disconcerting to try to converse, asked her what she was doing. "Merit," she answered, "I am saying the ninety-nine names of God for merit. How many names have you for God?" It set me thinking and sent me to my Bible. I found the word God in our translation is the Hebrew Elohim and has the same root as the Arabic Alla<sup>h</sup>, but a plural form either for majesty, or, as some think, to indicate the Trinity. Its meaning is strength and it was used in the Moslem war cry, Allah Akbar—God Almighty. I have been asked, "Is the Moslem Allah the same as our God?" And I can say the very word is the same. My study led me far afield. I found many other names. Jehovah, the name given to Moses (Ex. 3:14 and 6:3) means timeless existence and is translated by Moffat "The Eternal," in the authorized version LORD. These two names have many compounds. El Shaddai, the All-sufficient, given to Abraham (Gen. 17:1). The root Shad means a woman's breast and implies the Nourisher, so a Hindu said, "We call God Mother as the sweetest, dearest name there is."

Melchizedek calls God El Elyon, the Most High, as the Possessor of heaven and earth.

Abraham has still another name, (Gen. 21:33) El Olam, the Everlasting.

Jehovah is found in the compound, Jehovah Sabaoth, Lord of Hosts (1 Sam. 1:3), God in manifestation of power as in the triumphal paean of Psalm 24, "The Lord of Hosts, He is the King of Glory."

Other compounds of Jehovah are connected with special experi-

ences. Jehovah Jireh, the Lord will provide, when Abraham found a ram to sacrifice instead of Isaac (Gen. 22:14).

Jehovah Nissi, the Lord our banner, after the victory over Amalek (Ex. 17:15).

Jehovah Rapha, the Lord that healeth, after the bitter waters of Marah were sweetened (Ex. 15:26).

Jehovah Shalom, the Lord of Peace, to allay the fears of Gideon (Judges 6:24).

Jehovah Raah, the Lord my Shepherd, in Psalm 23.

Jehovah Tsidkenu, righteousness, given to Jeremiah in token of the restoration of Israel (Jer. 23:6).

Jehovah Shammah, the Lord is there, as the promise for the new Jerusalem seen in vision by Ezekiel (Ezek. 48:35).

So each experience was a revelation of God in some special attribute. Another name, Adonai, is translated Lord, often combined with Jehovah, Lord God, meaning master and is applied to man as well as Deity.

Isaiah uses the term Holy One of Israel, marking an advance in the conception of God, the highest attainment of Hebrew thought.

My Persian caller would not have understood all these Old Testament names, but when I told her Jesus said, "God is Love," she responded, "The first two words of our Koran are Rahman oo Rahim, the Merciful, the Compassionate," so we could agree and she was ready to hear more of how Jesus had taught us to pray "Our Father." This name is found indeed a few times in the Old Testament, but not used in address, nor explained with such tender and beautiful meaning as in the "Prodigal Son." The name Father is taken by the Moslems in a literal sense, so a better name is "God is a Spirit," thus linking Him with the spiritual, not the physical in man, whom he created in His own image.

In the East Jesus is called Prophet, one of the Great Five, Adam, Moses, David, Jesus and Mohammed, each believed greater than the preceding, but each speaking for God (the meaning of Prophet). Christ is translated Massih, the Arabic for Messiah, and Christians are called Massahee, so the names seem to have the real meaning from the root "to anoint." The very use of the name Messiah constantly

recalls that Jesus was the fulfillment of all the Old Testament hopes and longings, a king and priest, as only they were anointed. It is a wonderful tribute that the Koran speaks of Jesus as the only sinless Prophet, while Mohammed confesses sin and prays for mercy. The name "Ruh Ullah," Spirit of God, is given to Jesus in the Koran. Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew Joshua. Last year a life of Jesus was published under the name Joshua. Its meaning was told by Gabriel to Joseph before his birth (Matt. 1:21), "Thou shalt call his name Jesus for he shall save his people from their sin."

The Name of Jesus seems to be the motive power in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles. They work miracles in His Name, signs and wonders are done by His Name. Though commanded not to speak at all nor teach in the Name of Jesus, they proclaimed, "There is none other name under Heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." When threatened and beaten they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name.

"There is no Name so sweet on earth,  
No Name so sweet in Heaven,  
As that before His wondrous birth  
To Christ, the Savior given."

His disciples called Jesus, Rabbi, a name used today for teacher, and after his resurrection, Mary Magdalene called him Rabboni, My Master.

The Gospel of Matthew seems the one to give to Moslems. It begins in Arabic, Persian and Turkish, "Abraham's, David's son Jesus' genealogy." These two honored names attract attention and interest. Abraham is revered as ancestor by Moslem and Jew. He is known as the Friend of God and is always called Ibrahim Khaleel (The Friend). King David is regarded as author of the Mazmur (Psalms). "Son of David" is a title which even the Syrophenician woman, a foreigner, knew and used. The name "Son of Man" Jesus used for himself is recorded 79 times in the Gospels, but it was not original with him. It is used 92 times in Ezekiel when Jehovah addresses him, a term implying that he was to be a messenger to humanity, not to any one race. "Son of God" is the name Moslems find a great stumbling block, but the answer to them is that it is a relationship to God he



came to share with others, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). A very simple common name is given in Mark 6:3, "Is not this the carpenter?" A man's trade is usually prefixed to his name, and an essential part of it, so they undoubtedly spoke of him as "Carpenter Jesus." An old carpenter coming upon this verse was delighted, but refused to mark the place, wishing to come upon it unexpectedly and feel again his first thrill of surprise and delight.

Turning to names of people one might say with Shakespeare, "What's in a name?" For it would seem there is nothing more fortuitous and inconsequential than names, as we give them; but in the East names have a meaning and are given with a purpose. A child's name expresses the preciousness of the child or hope for its future or is a declaration of faith. The Hebrew is rich in names of the last sort compounded with the names of God. The Arabic has the name Abdullah, Slave of God. So in Hebrew El is found in Elijah, God is Jehovah; Elisha, God is Salvation; Emmanuel, God with us; Elnathan, God-given; Ariel, Lion of God; Daniel, God is Judge. Jah or Jehovah is also used in compounds. Jonathan, the Lord gives; Zechariah, the Lord remembers.

How many of these old Bible names have been adopted by us without knowing the meaning! Adam is simply man, Eve is life, Isaac laughter, well-named for the surprise and joy his birth caused. David is beloved, Reuben; Behold! a son. Joseph named his first born in Egypt Manasseh, forgetting, his second Ephraim, fruitful. Judah is praise, Samson, the sun, and his story is interpreted fancifully as a nature-myth.

Girls' names include jewels, birds, animals, flowers. Deborah, bee; Dorcas, gazelle; Rachel, ewe; Tamar, palm; Susanna, lily; Vash-ti, beauty. Similar to these are the Persian names Sitara, star (Esther, in Hebrew); Sona, duck; Tarlan, hawk; Yaghoot, ruby; Almas, diamond; Feruza, turquoise, the special jewel of Persia. Rose is both masculine and feminine. The succession of names is also observed. One man set out ambitiously with the patriarchs and had Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph as sons, and Sarah as daughter. Hearing that a boy's name was Abednego I after for his brothers, Shadrach and

Meshach, and found he had them. The traditional names of the Magi, Caspar, Melchior and Balthazar, are given to brothers. One is surprised by the use of some Bible names, which one would think of bad omen, such as Absalom, Bathsheba, Tamar, but the original meaning is known and kept. A Persian school girl, who became a Christian, asked if she might be baptized by the sacred name, Mary. I told her it was a favorite name with us, five women out of the eight in our mission were named Mary. A Persian lady who had been childless, after praying in vain at Moslem shrines, sent money to the Armenian church to have candles burned, with the vow to name her son Jesus if one were given her. He was given and the little boy attended our mission school when he was six years old and when I heard the boys call across the playground, "Jesus, how many marbles have you?" it gave me a vivid sense of the little boy Jesus in Nazareth.

Titles are also used in the East. Shahin Shah, King of Kings, is applied to the Persian king, a title which has come down from the great Empire of Darius, Abul Fath, father or source of victory, was the high-sounding name of one of our school boys. The compound term gave me a new understanding of the name "Everlasting Father" applied in Isaiah to the Messiah. Its meaning is really Source of eternity.

The list of Christians to whom Paul sends greetings in Romans 16 is a study in names. All are Greek or Latin, showing the wide use of those languages. Phoebe, moon, the feminine of Phoebus, the sun; Aquila, eagle; Priscilla, little old woman; Epinetus, from paeon, laudable; Junia, June; Urban, polite, from urbs, city; Aristobulus, best counselor; Narcissus, connected with the Greek story; Persis, a Persian woman; Rufus, red (was he not the son of Simon of Cyrene who bore Christ's cross?) Timotheus, fearing God; Onesimus, profitable, on which Paul made a pun (Philemon 1:11), "Who was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me"; Archippus, master of horse; Damaris, virgin; Felix, happy. There are traditional names, such as Balkis, Queen of Sheba, and Zuleika, Potiphar's wife, used in the East in the enlarged romances built on the Bible stories. In a Persian poem Zuleika becomes a beggar and sees Joseph passing

in his splendour, and in the Moslem Passion Play an interlude depicts Solomon sending a bird to invite Balkis, the Queen of Sheba, and going out to meet her in a French coupe. The anachronism is very amusing.

A change of names, when a new title has been given, is often confusing in Persia, as in English history. The title indicates a new rank. So changing names in the Bible is to show a new experience. Jacob, the supplanter, becomes Israel, a Prince of God. Naomi says to her old neighbors, "Call me not Naomi (pleasant), call me Mara (bitter), for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." His dying mother gave the name Benoni, son of the left hand, to her son, but his father changed it to Benjamin, son of the right hand. Impulsive, unreliable Simon, son of Jona, becomes Peter, a rock, transformed in character. Paul's name at first was Saul, named for the first king of Israel, just as in Persia Cyrus is still a favorite name. Paul (little) is used after his first convert Sergius Paulus, who perhaps became his patron, but Paul puns on it in calling himself "Less than the least of all saints." James and John were called Boanerges, sons of thunder, because they wished to call down fire in revenge, but they lost that title. Joses lost his first name and is remembered only as Barnabas, son of consolation. So in Revelation the promise is made to him that overcometh, "I will give him a white stone and in the stone a new name written," and these new names are written in the "Book of Life."

Some of the collective names for Christians have a deeper meaning from their Oriental coloring. Jesus said, "I have not called you slaves, but friends." There seems an illustration of what Jesus meant in the name of a Persian mountain tribe Shah Suvan, lovers of the King, on whose loyalty the king could always depend. Disciple, or learner, is applied both to a pupil and an apprentice at a trade. Martyr is given as a proper name with its original meaning, witness. At the first great church council of Nicaea, called by Constantine, there was a procession of "martyrs," men who had lost eyes or limbs, scarred or deformed by tortures, in the persecutions when they were witnesses. The Emperor and the whole Assembly rose in their honor. Pilgrim (Hajji) is a title given to one who has made the pil-



grimage to Mecca, and, when a crowd of pilgrims return after their long and perilous journey, the populace go out to meet them with songs and great rejoicing. It reminded me of the verse, "The ransomed of the Lord shall return with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, sorrow and sighing shall flee away." This name has given us the English classic, "Pilgrim's Progress," a favorite in Persian translation, and the beautiful hymn, "Pilgrims of the Night." The word Saint used by Paul in the address of his epistles and so often misused since means devotee. In Persian the word is Fidaee and was applied to those, who, in the beginning of the Persian revolution, marched in their shrouds in the procession, thus signifying that they were ready to die for the cause of liberty, counting not their lives dear to themselves. So Jesus said, "He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." This line I chose for the inscription on my husband's stone, when he died of typhoid in his service to the refugees in the Near East Relief.

## Symbols, Similes and Metaphors



THE figurative language of the Bible is alien to our thought, but natural to the poetical, mystical nature of the Oriental. As we study it, we learn to appreciate its beauty and impressiveness, expressing so much in concise form. Most strange and weird are the symbolic visions of the prophets. Daniel conceives History in the guise of great beasts, the lion is a symbol of Babylon, the bear of the Medes and Persians, the leopard with four wings, the swift and terrible Greek conquest, and last the fourth beast, "exceeding dreadful with teeth of iron and nails of brass," the Roman Empire. This use of animal figures to symbolize nations is found in Oriental sculpture. The winged bulls with human heads found on the walls of Nineveh's palaces seem to be a composite symbol of strength, swiftness and intelligence. In recent times a comic paper in Persia had a cartoon representing a little Persian lamb shivering between the lion of England and the bear of Russia. Ezekiel describes four Living Creatures with faces of a man, a lion, an ox and an eagle with wings and wheels within wheels. Much ingenuity has been used to interpret them and in Art they are connected with the four Gospels, Matthew, the ox, for sacrifice; Mark, the lion, for royalty; Luke, the man, for humanity; John, the eagle, soaring highest, for divinity, four different aspects of Christ. Sometimes different interpretations are given. May they not mean the great forces, Labor (ox), Government (lion), Society (man), Science (eagle), as inspired by God's spirit in the progress of human history. "They went straight forward."

Chief of Christian symbols is the Cross. When the Turks took Constantinople in 1453 A.D., they converted San Sophia, a Christian cathedral, into a mosque, but they could not take the cross out of it. It was built in the form of a Greek cross and the cross was carved everywhere on its stones. The Moslems call Christians "Khach

Parest" (cross-worshippers). In the World War they applied to Christians the same test the Romans used in the first century, drawing a cross on the ground they would command Christians to step on it. Many became martyrs rather than dishonor this sacred symbol of their faith. Another symbol of the early Christians was a fish. On meeting a stranger a Christian would draw a fish, as if casually, with his staff in the dust to see if it was recognized, then he knew the stranger was a Christian. It is found in the Catacombs and the explanation is that fish in Greek ΙΧΘΥΣ has five letters, which stand for Jesus Christ God's Son Savior, a creed in itself.

The ancient tradition of the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove is preserved in Armenian churches to this day, for the holy oil is contained in a silver chalice fashioned like a dove.

The prophets also drew from nature striking and beautiful symbols. From a mountain top I once looked down over the plain below, a brown desert of sand, but like a green ribbon winding through it was the course of a little river with rose-bushes on its banks and orchards of flowering fruit and beyond fields of waving grain. To my companions I read Ezekiel's Vision of the River coming out from under the Temple, increasing in depth, till it could not be passed over, with trees on either side, bringing life to the desert and even healing the Dead Sea so that it teemed with fish—"everything shall live whither the river cometh." The Vision was spread before our eyes, a symbol of Persia's need and the transforming power of God's Grace.

### PERSIA

A land of barren plains and mountains bleak and bare,  
Deprived of summer rains to make it green and fair,  
Yet in that desert land, where'er a river flows,  
Gardens on either hand are fragrant with the rose.  
The river at its source is fed by mountain snows  
And in its winding course brings life where'er it goes.  
So in the prophet's dream from out the Holy Place  
Came forth a living stream—the river of God's Grace.  
Oh River deep and grand, flow through this land of woes  
And make its desert sand to blossom as the rose.



A popular book of recent years is, "The Fountain," the story of a man seeking an inner source of spiritual joy and strength independent of outer circumstances. To satisfy just such a quest Jesus said, "The water that I shall give him, shall be in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life," and again, "He that believeth on me, out of him shall flow rivers of living water." This symbolic use of water is found often in the Bible from Isaiah's, "Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," and David's "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God," down to the last invitation in Revelation, "Let him that is athirst come and take the water of life freely." One who has traveled under the burning sun of Persia, "in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is," can appreciate the agony of thirst and realize that water is the greatest necessity of life.

Next to water is bread as a necessity of life, so Jesus uses this also as a symbolic name, "I am the bread of life, he that cometh to me shall never hunger." To have seen famine-sufferers, as we did after the war, is to realize this great elemental need, and to give bread to the hungry is an experience one cannot forget. When we had been cut off from the world for three months during the Persian Revolution, I had word from the English bank in Tabriz that a thousand dollars had been cabled from the Red Cross headquarters in Washington for relief. Our Consul at the order of President McKinley had organized a Red Cross chapter and we had been registered at the Washington office, so, when news of the siege of Tabriz reached America, these funds were sent us and thousands more came through our Board, so Christ again fed the multitude.

Persia might be called the "Land of the Vine." A vineyard is like a sea with billows of green, as the vines grow over long, low ridges in parallel lines. The process of making a vineyard is described in Isaiah 5. "My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill; and he fenced it (walled it), and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower (a watch-tower) in the midst of it, and also made a wine-press therein: and he looked it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes."

In this symbolic way the prophet speaks for God reproaching Israel. Jesus, too, takes from the vineyard a symbolic name, "I am the vine." The golden vine on the door of the temple must have been the picture before their eyes as he spoke.

Of all Jesus' symbolic names the one that has the greatest appeal to Persians is "I am the light of the world." Their ancient teacher, Zoroaster, had taught there were two principles in the world, Light and Darkness in perpetual conflict. The former, Ahura-Mazda, in the sculptures of Persepolis is always represented as a winged figure above the king as his guardian. Strange that this old name Mazda is used for our electric bulbs today. Calling once on a Persian lady, she said, "We have everything we need for ourselves in our own country, the finest wheat in the world, cotton, tobacco, silk, even tea can be raised in Mazanderan." I pointed to an electric light recently installed and asked, "Where did you get that?" She laughed, "From your country." "Yes," I answered, "but we call it by a Persian name, and we have no carpets to compare with your beautiful ones. Let's each share the best we have," to which she agreed. In Malachi's prophecy we read, "The Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in his wings," a figure that appeals to Persians, for on their flag the Sun, their ancient symbol of deity, rises behind the royal lion.

The door (Arabic bab) was taken by a Persian reformer of the past century as his title and his followers were called Babis. The door as a means of access, a way of entrance, is very expressive, when one remembers, the high walls inclosing a house with the one door on the street. So, long before the Persian Bab, Christ said, "I am the Door, I am the Way."

The shepherd and his flock is a common sight in Persia, as he goes before them, leading them up the mountain side wherever he can find green pastures and a little brook. The relation of the shepherd to his sheep is very close. In a village I saw a shepherd bringing in his flock at night and calling them by names. I asked, "Do you have a name for each one?" He answered, "Doesn't a father know each one of his children?" The twenty-third Psalm or Shepherd's Psalm is one consistent picture throughout. The "table" should be "Thou spreadest a table-cloth before me." Tables are not used, but the

cloth is spread on the ground, as is the green meadow for the sheep. The double-handled cup, full to overflowing, is held for the lambs to drink, and is it too fanciful to think of "goodness and mercy," as the faithful watch dogs, that invariably follow and bring up the rear. The Good Shepherd is surely a beautiful name Jesus chose for himself. In the Catacombs he is often so represented and in his arms not a lamb, but a kid as Matthew Arnold writes, in his poem on the early church.

In John 10, the two names, Shepherd and Door, are used together and there is a real connection.

### THE SHEPHERD AND THE DOOR

A stranger once in Syria saw  
An old sheep-fold without a door,  
A square enclosed in rough, stone walls,  
An opening, and nothing more.

The stranger asked, "Where is the Door?"  
A Syrian answered his surprise—  
"The shepherd is the door himself,  
Within that opening he lies."

No lamb in foolish restlessness  
Or terror, waking from its sleep  
To wander from the fold, can pass  
That door and shepherd of the sheep.

No wolf, that creeping through the night  
To find a place where he may leap  
To enter and devour, can pass  
That door and shepherd of the sheep.

Lord Jesus, by thy parable  
Thou art the Shepherd and the Door;  
Keep out our deadly enemy,  
Keep in thy sheep forevermore.

A name, which surely only the poetic, romantic Oriental would dare to use is the one John the Baptist gave to Jesus when he said,



"He that hath the bride is the bride-groom; but the friend of the bride-groom, who standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice; this my joy therefore is fulfilled." In the mystical book of Revelation, the same figure is carried out, Christ the Bridegroom, the Church the Bride, and even in the Old Testament it occurs, "Thy Maker is thy husband" (Isaiah 54:5), "I will betroth thee unto me forever" (Hosea 2:19). Persian mystics interpret the beautiful love-poems of Saadi and Hafiz as expressing really the soul's ecstasy in longing for God. The Song of Songs which Bernard Shaw calls the Bible's "one great love-poem, the only one that can satisfy a man who is really in love," has been interpreted laboriously as having a spiritual meaning, but the Bible, as a book of universal human experience, would be lacking without this poem of human love with its exquisite descriptions, its ecstatic emotions, its expression of faithful devotion to "one and one only." Persian poetry is full of just such descriptions of physical charms.

The Book of Revelation, written in the days of Nero's persecution, is like a document in cypher for the sake of secrecy and safety. The cypher-name for Jesus is "The Lamb," reminding us of John's introduction, "Behold the Lamb of God," a name that suggests innocence, gentleness and sacrifice. Moslems do not have sacrifice, yet I once saw this incident. A young bride was dying and our lady doctor was summoned. I accompanied her. We were ushered into the room, where the poor young girl lay on her pallet on the floor. The women said, "Wait! we are trying something else to save her." A lamb was brought in and dragged seven times around her bed, then taken out and sacrificed. "We have given a life for a life," they said, so they dismissed us and she died within an hour.

Differing from a symbol, which is a sign used conventionally to typify a thing, we also have metaphors, which are names not literally applicable, but used to portray certain characteristics. The term King is throughout the Bible applied to God and the conception Orientals have of God is that of an Eastern despot of boundless wealth and resources, holding the life and possessions of his subjects in his hands, demanding unquestioning obedience, "in whose favor is life." So in the Bible there are numerous passages using this metaphor for God.

"The Lord is King forever" (Psalm 10:16). "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever" (1 Tim. 1:17), "the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords" (1 Tim. 6:15), and in the Song in Revelation, "great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty, just and true are thy ways, Thou King of Saints." No other name has in it such implications of majesty and power. I saw the famous Nasr-i-Din Shah, who was sixty years on the throne, contemporary with Queen Victoria, when he returned from a trip to Europe, making a triumphal entry into Tabriz with a thousand baggage-animals in his train. In his mien and bearing he was "every inch a king" and the people in throngs went out to welcome him, as if he were a god.

The Kingdom of God is a wonderful conception, an ideal the prophets portrayed. Daniel "saw in the night visions and, behold, one like the Son of Man." "And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." The keynote of Jesus' preaching is, "The Kingdom of God." He sent his disciples to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom into all the world. A Persian lady once asked me, "Why did you come here?" "I had to," I answered. "But why?" she exclaimed. "Our prophet commanded us to go into all the world and give His Gospel to everyone." At once she turned to the others, "So did our prophet command us to go into all the world and force everyone by fire and sword to become Moslems. Do you see the difference?" She recognized that both religions claimed the world, but by different methods. The boys in our school had a debate on, "Resolved, that the pen is mightier than the sword." At the time our city was being besieged, and one boy on the sword-side said, "If the enemy force the gates tomorrow, I suppose you will go out and throw books at them." Another boy on the other side said, "I have an argument you can't answer. Our prophet told his followers to conquer the world by the sword. Jesus said, 'Put up the sword—give my gospel to every creature.' From my study of geography, I find Jesus is winning the world, not Mohammed."

In the Psalms we have an oft repeated metaphor, "God is our refuge and strength," and, as David found a hiding-place among the rocks for protection, he sings, "The Lord is my rock and my salvation." "Unto thee will I cry, O Lord, my rock." "Be thou my strong rock for a house of defense to save me." The little village of Zenjanab is protected by a great overhanging rock. When the spring floods sweep down, carrying away houses, cattle and men, this village is safe in the shadow of the rock, that turns the tide from them. Up in its side is a cleft where we could climb, and as we watched the flood below we sang, "Rock of Ages cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee."

There are two artisans whom we can always find in an Oriental bazaar, the goldsmith and the potter. Both words are used as metaphors for God. The goldsmith sits before the glowing coals with a crucible in his hand, and, when the ore has melted, throwing off its dross, till the clear liquid reflects his face, it is ready to pour into moulds to become a king's crown or a bride's ring. In Zech. 13:9 we find, "I will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried." In Malachi 3:3 it is written of the Messiah, "He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." Fire in the old Zoroastrian religion was regarded as the great purifier. In this sense, "God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29). John, the Baptist, speaks of Jesus, "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." In Isaiah's vision (6:6) the seraphim touches his lips with a live coal, saying "Lo, thy iniquity is taken away, thy sin purged." Fire is also used for suffering that tests character (1 Peter 1:7), "The trial of your faith being much more precious than gold, though it be tried with fire." (1 Peter 4:12) "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you." There is a tradition of Mohammed, that he was invited to a rich man's house, who showed him his treasures and boasted that he never had had misfortune, sickness or death in his family. Mohammed hastily rose to flee, and, when the man asked why, answered, "God has given you up. You are incorrigible and I fear to be with you." As a symbol of worship the ancient Persians



kept an undying fire on their altars, its upward-leaping flames and glowing heat signifying aspiration and devotion. The same thought is in our hymn, "My heart an altar and thy love the flame." At Pentecost the Holy Spirit is said to have come upon the waiting disciples as flames of fire, a mystical experience, that transformed them from weak and cowardly men to flaming witnesses, that set the world on fire.

The Potter is a metaphor used in Persian poetry as well as in the Bible. Omar Khayyam in the Rubaiyat writes:

I remember stopping by the way  
To watch a potter thumping his wet clay.  
Shapes of all Sorts and Sizes, great and small,  
That stood along the floor and by the wall;  
And some loquacious Vessels were; and some  
Listened perhaps, but never talk'd at all.  
Said one among them—"Surely not in vain  
My substance of the common Earth was ta'en  
And to this Figure moulded, to be broke,  
Or trampled back to shapeless Earth again."  
Then said a Second—"Ne'er a peevish Boy  
Would break the Bowl from which he drank in joy:  
And He that with his hand the Vessel made  
Will surely not in after Wrath destroy."  
After a momentary silence spake  
Some Vessel of a more ungainly make;  
"They sneer at me for leaning all awry:  
What! did the Hand then of the Potter shake?"

Compare Jeremiah 18:1-6—"The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O

house of Israel." In Isaiah 64:8—"O Lord, we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." In Isaiah 45:9—"Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, what makest thou?" In Romans 9:20-21—"O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, 'Why hast thou made me thus?' Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" In Eccl. 7:13—"Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which he hath made crooked?"

Similes are very vivid and often used in the Bible. Proverbs is full of them. I will give a few examples.

"As cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country." How true that was as we awaited the mail from home and especially when at one time we were cut off for three months. A young Englishman in the Indo-European telegraph office was frantic for the daily letters his fiancée in England wrote him. When at last the road was open it was the joke of the town that he got a "barrel of letters" which he sat up all night to read.

"As smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that sent him." "Smoke to the eyes" always recalls the village houses, where baking is done in a "tandur," a clay oven sunk in the floor. The fire burns in the bottom of it and clouds of acrid smoke pour up to the opening in the roof and everyone's eyes smart intolerably, till it burns down to red coals.

"As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman who is without discretion." This refers to the jewel set in gold worn by women on the nostril. Swine are always the symbol of stupidity, so the incongruity of beauty without brains.

"A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike." Mud roofs often develop holes on a very rainy day and the "continual dropping" is exasperating. Where there are four contentious women, the clamor must be unbearable. A Moslem once told me, "I needn't go to the other world to know what hell is, I have four wives."

There are striking similes in the Bible for the transitoriness of life. "As for man his days are as grass; as a flower of the field so

he flourisheth." Ps. 103:15.

Omar Khayyam, the Persian poet, wrote:

"One thing is certain, This life flies;  
The flower that once has blown forever dies."

"My days are like a shadow that declineth." (Ps. 102:11)

Again the Persian poet:

"We are no other than a moving row  
Of magic shadow-shapes that come and go."

In Oriental language the Cup is used for both the sorrow and joy of life, as in the Rubaiyat:

"Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run  
The wine of life keeps oozing drop by drop."

So Jesus prayed, "Let this cup pass from me," in the agony of the Garden, and the Psalmist sings in gratitude: "My cup runneth over." I recall this incident in illustration. A young woman who had been very happily married lost her husband. I feared she would be overwhelmed with grief and dreaded to go to see her, but she met me with a shining face and said: "I have had my cup of joy," and she went on to tell of happy memories.

"For some we loved, the loveliest and the best  
That from his Vintage rolling Time has prest,  
Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,  
And one by one crept silently to rest."

The use of similes is often a basis for that Parallelism, which is the form of Hebrew poetry. As our poetry has a rhyme of sound, Hebrew poetry, one may say, has a rhyme of thought. After the first line, a second gives a comparison, a contrast or an explanation. It should be printed in lines to look like poetry. As examples from Persian poetry which has both rhyme of sound and rhyme of thought,

"At eve a watcher sat beside a dying bed;  
At dawn the watcher not the sick was dead."

From the poet Saadi:

"Saith God, Who comes an inch toward me through doubtings dim



In blazing light I will approach a yard towards him."

Skill is shown in matching words of one line with the next.

Examples from Hebrew poetry:

Couplets of Comparison:

"As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear;

So is a wicked ruler over the poor people." (Prov. 28:15)

"As the heaven is high above the earth,

So great is his mercy toward them that fear him." (Ps. 103:11).

Couplets of Contrast:

"As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more;

But the righteous is an everlasting foundation." (Prov. 10:25)

"There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing:

There is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches." Prov. 13:7.

"A merry heart doeth good like a medicine:

But a broken spirit drieth the bones." (Prov. 17:22)

Couplets of Repetition:

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,

And a light unto my path." (Ps. 119:105).

"He shall cover thee with his feathers ,

And under his wings shalt thou trust." (Ps. 91:4).

"Riches certainly make themselves wings,

They fly away as an eagle toward heaven." (Prov. 23:5)

Sudden changes of fortune are common in the East, as in the case of Job. Not only famine and flood, but bandits and robbers and war may suddenly bring utter poverty.

A parable is an extended simile making a direct comparison. Jesus' parables begin, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like," and his illustrations are drawn from life. I was often so thankful that I had these simple stories to read to the village women, which fitted into their daily experience. It carried much more weight to read from a book, first because they were surprised that a woman could read, and then because they reverence a book. Of course, after the reading they asked questions, or gave their own interpretation. It is a question how far the parallel in a parable should be drawn. The Unjust Judge is true to life, but is not a picture of God; the point of the

parable is the importunity of the widow. That also is true to life. These stories not only attract attention at once, but are in a form easy to remember. It is wonderful how a figurative expression will stick in the memory. I met a woman in a distant village who said: "A woman like you came here seven years ago and taught me a prayer, 'Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.' I have prayed it ever since."

A French writer has written a book on Jesus as a Poet. It is with the Oriental idea of Poetry that he must be judged. His sentences have such rhythm that they can be set to music, his similes are clear cut as etchings, his phrases have an antiphonal balance so that translation does not rob them of poetic form. In any language their swing and sweetness can be retained. The Beatitudes are an Oriental poem of perfect symmetry, eight couplets closing with a longer couplet. The Lord's Prayer is another example of balanced phrases, the three petitions in the first half corresponding to the three in the last half. The closing verses of Matt. 7 are two contrasting pictures with repetition of the phrases, "the rain descended, the floods came, the winds blew and beat upon that house," and the ending in one, "it fell not," in the other "it fell and great was the fall of it."

Even the hyperbole Jesus uses is truly Oriental. "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thy own eye?" "If thy right hand causeth thee to stumble, cut it off and cast it from thee."

As my interest was specially in the women, I was amazed to see how Jesus' words appealed to them. His parables about women, his teaching about divorce, his talking with women directly, his women friends, "last at the cross and first at the sepulchre," won their hearts, especially his compassion. They understood and laughed at the play of wit between him and the Syrophoenician woman, when she turned his seeming rebuff, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to dogs," into an argument, "yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs."

One Easter several Moslem women came "to bless" my "Feast." One of them said to me: "Your religion is so full of joy. Ours is so sad. We keep the day of our Prophet's death and have a month of mourning for his grandsons. Your Prophet, you say, rose from the

dead."

I answered: "We, too, remember the Lord Jesus' sufferings, but we call the day of his death 'Good Friday,' for he brought life and immortality to light and said, 'Because I live ye shall live also.' " Her words made me realize "the glad tidings of great joy" I had to give her and I thought of Jesus' words: "These things have I spoken unto you that my joy might remain in you and that your joy might be full."



## Passages Connected With Special Experiences



SALM 91 will always be connected in our minds with the cholera of 1892. These epidemics occur periodically, starting in India and spreading from village to village. Suddenly cases appeared in Tabriz and there was a panic. All who could fled to the mountains. Literally the pestilence "walked in darkness," for every night took its toll, "and wasted at noon day," for suddenly as people walked the streets, the convulsive pains came upon them and they fell, writhing in agony. Dr. Mary Bradford had her daily clinic as usual and gave out a specific remedy, the prescription of a missionary doctor in Constantinople, which is effective if given in time. Miss Holliday moved the few orphan-girls left in the school to the large garden of the Boys' "Memorial School" and there kept strict quarantine with a cow, a flock of sheep, supplies of flour, fruit from the garden and boiling all the water. Not one fell sick. New members of the mission went to Zenjanab, sixteen miles up the mountain, and I went with them, as I was expecting a baby next month. My husband saw me there safely and then returned to his post of duty in the city. I shall never forget the silhouette of man and horse going over the hill-top down into the valley of death. He had some strange experiences. A young Hollander on business arrived one evening, was stricken and died before morning. My husband found in his papers that he was Protestant and gave him a Christian burial, writing the sad news to his mother. One day he met two Americans in the street, seeking a lodging. They were Theodore Child, the journalist, and an artist who accompanied him. They had come from India, and, not knowing the language, had no idea that they were in the midst of cholera. Mr. Child fell sick the first night, but Dr. Bradford's timely treatment saved his life.

Sad to say, later on his way out of Persia, he took typhoid fever and died. Friends of his in Paris endowed a room in the hospital in his memory and sent an oil portrait to hang in it with inscription in English and Persian. After raging a month, the cholera stopped, as suddenly as it began, when the first frost came. When the first service was held in our church, Psalm 116 was read to express our gratitude, "I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. The sorrows of death compassed me. Then called I upon the name of the Lord. Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears and my feet from falling."

Psalm 23. This Psalm is always connected in my mind with Mirza Ibrahim. He was a Moslem living in the village of Khoi, and became a Christian by reading the New Testament. He boldly proclaimed his new faith and immediately persecution began. His family disowned him, his wife left him. Finally he was sent in chains to Tabriz and put in prison with criminals. We did what we could for him, sent bedding and a clean shirt to him which his jailer appropriated. At the time I was translating Myer's "Shepherd Psalm," and as my Persian teacher wrote out the chapters I sent them one by one to him. We got to the verse, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil." The next thing we heard he had been strangled by his fellow prisoners. They were cut-throats and thieves but fanatical Moslems and they had gathered around him choking him in turn asking, "Ali or Jesus, whom do you choose?" With his last breath he murmured "Jesus." Our old gatekeeper followed him to the grave. Whenever he passed that cemetery with me he would turn and point silently to a certain corner. I understood him. There lay Mirza Ibrahim who was "faithful unto death."

"Before they call I will answer and while they are yet speaking, I will hear."

In the fall of 1892, without warning, officers of the government entered the compound of the Mission and sealed the doors of the "Memorial School" and the church. Our work was at a standstill. Those doors could not be opened except by command of the King.

A Petition was sent by telegram to Teheran signed by the church members, begging that the church might be opened, "That we may pray for his Majesty's life and prosperity," but there was no reply. A day of prayer was appointed and we were to meet at nine o'clock. Before the hour a telegram came from the King to open the doors. It seemed a fulfillment of the verse quoted above. We heard afterward how it came about. A Minister from Washington was about to arrive at Teheran, and our friends at court represented to his Majesty that it would be a poor welcome for him to hear the first thing about this protest, and that, in honor of his arrival, the King should show his favor to the Americans in Tabriz by reopening their school and church. This explained the change of policy and the arrival of the Minister just then seemed providential.

Romans 8:35-39—During the great war the Turks began to persecute the Armenian Christians living in Turkey. Two hundred thousand of them fled to Russia, leaving their homes and all they possessed behind them. If they had denied Christ and turned Mohammedan, they could have remained in safety. With little food and scanty clothing these companies of men, women and children marched on foot over the mountains in the dead of winter. What sustained them? I heard that a young evangelist read to them these words, and they seemed indeed to fit the occasion, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." John 15:13. In 1909 the city of Tabriz was besieged by the king's army. It had sent its defiance, when the king revoked the Constitution which his father had granted. That is why

he had sent this army to besiege them. The city was within a week of starvation. Already mobs of women gathered in the streets demanding bread. We had begun to give out relief. In our school was a young teacher, Howard Baskerville, a graduate of Princeton, who had come out for a three years' term. He was so concerned at the plight of the city and at our own danger that he left the school, explaining by a note that he had gone to the camp to help defend the city. He knew something of military tactics, having lived as a boy near a fort in the West. He organized a troop of young noblemen, most of them his pupils, and drilled them. One night he planned a sortie to open a road and bring in provisions. His plan was betrayed and the enemy were ready to attack them. He was shot dead. His death stirred the city as no other had done. His funeral was held in our church, which was crowded with officials, soldiers, friends and the boys of the school, who preceded the coffin carrying wreaths of flowers. At the grave a Persian orator with great eloquence pronounced a eulogy. He said, "The country from which Baskerville came is so far away that when we sleep, they wake, and when we wake, they sleep. From the other side of the world he came to shed his blood for us. His name will never be forgotten, it is written in our history." Many Persian women came to call and expressed their condolences and grief. They said, "He was our brother, he died to save us, he knew what would happen if that army of barbarians had entered the city." His death was not in vain. It really saved the city. Before this, the consuls had appealed to their various governments in London, Paris and St. Petersburg, representing the danger of the European colony and asking for intervention. Nothing was done, till the news of the death of this young American stirred them to action. England asked Russia to send in troops, as it is the nearest, and ten days after his death, a regiment of Russian soldiers marched in singing and the king's army melted away. The Sunday after his death a sermon was preached in our church on this text, given above.



THE PEARL  
(Matt. 13:45-46)

Far away in the isles of Bahrein,  
Down under the depths of the sea  
The Persian diver gathers shells  
For the goodly pearls there may be.  
And what is the price of pearls?  
A merchant man once for one,  
'Tis said, gave all that he possessed  
And counted the deed well done.

And what is the price of souls?  
The price was set so high  
The Son of God gave all He had  
And came to earth to buy,  
Humanity the gem He sought,  
More precious in His sight  
Than is the Pearl of Persia's king,  
His glory and delight.

The "Sea of Light," the largest pearl in the world, is the proudest possession of the Persian crown.

This interpretation of Jesus' parable of the Pearl is an ancient one. "They shall be mine in the day when I make up my jewels, saith the Lord of Hosts." (Mal. 3:17)

An early Christian Father explains this parable to mean Christ's quest for man, not, as is usual, man's quest for Christ.

## Interceding for Others in Persia



ERSIA is a land where the practice and power of intercession is specially noticeable. There Esther pleaded for her people at the peril of her life. There Daniel "set his face" to pray for Jerusalem. There Nehemiah wept and fasted day and night, claiming God's promises of mercy to Israel. These are Bible incidents, that happened in Persia, showing importunate, impassionate intercession for others wonderfully answered.

Today in Persia the practice of intercession is an universal custom in every kind of affair from politics to marriage proposals. Any one, seeking a favor, does not make his petition directly, but finds a friend to act as "go-between," or, as the Armenian expresses it, "one to speak well" for him. This friend in making the plea uses the words "for my sake," as chief argument, so the expression, "for Jesus' sake," which we use to close our prayers, impresses the Persians, as it accords with this custom of making an appeal, and is considered very forceful.

At a time when liberal sentiments were dangerous, a young Persian teacher in our school was arrested, because he did not shave his head after the Moslem fashion. This was regarded as a sign of lax orthodoxy and foreign sympathies. A friend of the school came in hot haste to inform us and advise an appeal to our consul. Then realizing that this would take time and meanwhile the young man might lose not only his hair but his head, he exclaimed, "I'll go myself." So efficient was his prompt intercession that the teacher was back, safe and sound, for his afternoon classes. Our friend "stirred up himself to take hold" of the matter, making it his personal responsibility without waiting for others.

A boy in our school was expelled for stealing books

and selling them in the bazaar. His mother came to the Principal to plead for him. Drawing aside her veil, contrary to law and custom, she poured out such a torrent of supplication for forgiveness and restoration, that for her sake the boy was given another chance. The self-forgetfulness of intercession is illustrated in her case, for she broke through a custom which is second nature to a Moslem woman, that she might plead face to face for her son, in an abandon of motherly love and anxiety.

One of our school boys met with an accident, being crushed against a wall by a passing carriage. His mother came to me to beg the doctor to attend him. At first I demurred, saying, "My petition is not necessary. That's the doctor's business, just what he is ready and waiting to do." She insisted, "The boy is your boy and the Doctor your friend, and will come for your sake." So again and again I had to ask for the doctor's kind offices in such cases and was reminded that God is willing to be entreated, though he is waiting to be gracious.

One intercessor is often considered not enough, as the petition is stronger by every additional petitioner. The Governor of Tabriz wished his nephew to be admitted to the school, just as the school was closing and the Principal leaving—a most inopportune time. He sent six different men, friends of ours, day after day to importune for him and got his wish by the number, persistence and effective efforts of his messengers. "If two of you shall agree on earth touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in Heaven."

A government official, living near us, was arrested without warning by the king's officers and sent in chains to Teheran. His son at once took asylum in the stall of the Crown Prince's favorite horse, that he might get a chance to beseech the Prince to intercede in his father's behalf. He sought the most powerful intercessor, even the king's son. So position and favor make a plea powerful and without them even the most earnest efforts are in vain. When the Russians proclaimed martial law in Tabriz an Armenian revolutionist was condemned to be hanged. His friends made every effort to save him, a petition was signed by many names, the Bishop went down

on his knees before the General, the condemned man's wife telegraphed to the Czarina, but all in vain. All these petitioners had no favor, no influence, and their petitions did not avail.

During the same "Reign of Terror," a young Persian was arrested and condemned to death. His mother threw herself at the feet of her sister, a Princess of wealth and power, begging her to intercede for him. The Princess sent a letter by a horseman at a gallop, who reached the Governor a few minutes before the time set for the execution. The Princess' rank and influence were so great, that release was granted.

On the tenth day of the month of Muharram, when the processions of devotees pass through the streets, some beating their backs with chains and others cutting their heads with swords, till the blood runs down over their white robes, it is the custom for them to go to the governor's gate and demand the release of several prisoners. The blood they have shed is their warrant for this favor and it is granted. This is a striking illustration, that reminds us how we may have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, through whom we have access with confidence to the throne of grace."

We have heard in the World war how the Turks and Kurds came down upon the Christian villages of the Urumia plain, destroying everything before them. In the village of Geog Tapa a valiant stand was made by the Nestorians in self defence, but their ammunition gave out. Dr. Packard, hearing of their danger, resolved to see what he could do by personal intercession. He had treated many Kurds in his hospital and had visited the Sheikh in his own village; so, claiming friendship and favor, he begged for the lives of these people and his petition was granted. Carrying the American flag, he went to the village at midnight and brought one thousand men, women and children to the Mission compound, thus saving them from a terrible death.

This custom of intercession in Persia gives new meaning to the words: We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous, who ever liveth to make intercession for us.



## THE MAGI

The Persian Magi watch with eager eyes  
Beneath the glowing stars of Eastern skies,  
Seeking a Sign to guide their quest for Light  
To One foretold to bring the Reign of Right.

They see his Star and travel many days  
With laden camels over desert ways.  
Gold, myrrh and frankincense they bring  
And hail the Babe of Bethlehem as King.

So not in vain though long delayed, this Sign  
Has seemed to be a Prophecy divine.  
Persia again shall seek Him from afar  
While ever upward climbs His Empire's Star.









